

# Emerson Valley School

Hodder Lane, Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes, MK4 2JR

**Inspection dates** 2–3 July 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' standards by the end of Year 6 have not been high enough from their starting points in Year 3. By the end of Year 6 in 2013, attainment was average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing.
- Pupils' progress is not yet consistently good. Recent improvements in progress have yet to have an impact on results by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' achievement in writing lags behind that in reading and mathematics.
- Not all year groups have enough chances to write extended pieces to develop their skills in writing.
- There are inconsistencies in pupils' handwriting and presentation. Some work is untidy and poorly presented.
- Teaching is not yet resulting in good progress for all pupils in all key subject areas.
- At times, work is not at the right level of difficulty for different groups of pupils, especially the most able.
- Expectations of the amount of work pupils should produce are not always high enough.
- Some leaders in charge of year groups are new to their posts and are in the process of developing their skills. Not all leaders have a detailed understanding of pupils' performance across the school.
- Leaders and staff have not been effective enough in seeking parents' views, responding to concerns and in communicating the school's improvements and strengths to parents.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are well behaved in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils feel safe at school and well looked after by the staff.
- Attendance is above average and punctuality has improved since the previous inspection.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of additional activities, such as clubs, visits and particularly sport.
- Senior leaders have a clear view of the school's performance and are taking positive steps to raise achievement and improve teaching
- Governors are providing support and suitable challenge.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 15 lessons. Some of these were seen jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- Considerable time was spent analysing pupils' work and the information on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, representatives from the local authority, governors and pupils.
- The inspection team took account of 81 responses to the online survey, Parent View.
- Questionnaires from 19 members of staff were analysed.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including school policies, safeguarding procedures and the school's development planning.

## Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Colin Lower	Additional Inspector
Jane Richmond	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.*

### Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-sized school.
- Just over half of the pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- An average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked-after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is just above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are relatively new and took up their posts in September 2013.
- There have been several changes to the teaching staff since the last inspection.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all pupils make good progress by ensuring that:
  - teachers always set work at the right level of difficulty for pupils, particularly the most able
  - teachers make clear their expectations about the quantity of work that all pupils should complete in lessons.
- Raise pupils' achievement in writing by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to write extended good quality pieces
  - taking steps to improve the consistency of handwriting and presentation so that it is good across the school
  - extending opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in different subjects.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that all leaders have the necessary skills and a detailed understanding of pupils' performance so that they can work together successfully in raising achievement and improving teaching across the school
  - establishing positive partnerships with parents by seeking their views, responding to their concerns effectively and conveying the school's improvement and successes.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because attainment by the end of Year 6 has not been high enough, given pupils' starting points. In 2013, attainment by the end of Year 6 was average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing.
- Last year's Year 6 entered the school with above average attainment. More recently, attainment on entry has been closer to average.
- Positive action is being taken to raise achievement by improving teaching and assessment procedures. Pupils are now making faster progress and the underachievement of the past in Years 3 to 6 has been arrested. Nevertheless, pupils' progress is not yet consistently good in all areas. The improved progress has yet to have a full impact on attainment by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in writing trails behind that of reading and mathematics. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write extended pieces. Grammar, punctuation and spelling are improving but there is too much variation in pupils' handwriting and presentation, with some work being untidy.
- While there are some good examples of pupils applying their writing skills in different subjects and topics, this effective practice is not consistent throughout the school.
- Pupils' reading is improving. Pupils enjoy reading and have a secure grasp of essential skills. The older pupils are applying reading skills well to their studies.
- In mathematics, pupils have improved their calculation skills and mathematical vocabulary. They apply their mathematical knowledge and skills competently to solve challenging problems.
- In 2013, the Year 6 pupils supported by additional funding attained lower standards than the other pupils in reading, mathematics and writing. These pupils were about 10 months behind the others in reading, nine months in mathematics and eight months in writing. Effective steps have been taken to close the gap between the groups. In all year groups, those supported by pupil premium are making faster progress than the others in mathematics. Eligible pupils are making faster progress than the others in reading in Year 4 and 5 and faster progress in writing in Years 4 and 6.
- In 2013, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the higher levels was broadly average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. There are some good examples where the most able pupils are successfully challenged and stretched, especially in mathematics. However, on occasions, the work set is not demanding enough for these pupils.
- There is no significant difference between the achievement of different ethnic groups in the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are now making faster progress than previously. Many are now making good progress, particularly in reading.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve at least as well as other groups.
- Pupils are developing healthy lifestyles and physical fitness well through lessons in physical education and the impressive range of additional sporting activities provided.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- While improving, teaching has not been strong enough to result in good progress for all groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils' can achieve and how much work they should produce have not been consistently high in all classes. Consequently, some pupils do not complete their work and they do not progress as well as they should.
- The work set is not always at the right levels of difficulty for different groups of pupils. In particular, the most able are not sufficiently challenged and extended, particularly in writing.
- Teachers use discussion and visual stimuli effectively to generate ideas for writing. However, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to write extended pieces of a good quality. The

teaching of handwriting skills is not consistent throughout the school. As a result, there is variation in pupils' handwriting and presentation.

- Teachers establish positive relationships with their class and manage pupils well. They provide clear instructions and explanations and so pupils know what they are expected to learn.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are promoted well. For example, in a Year 5 class, pupils showed empathy and strong subject knowledge as they described the life and possible feelings of First World War soldiers fighting in the trenches. A film clip provided valuable information and the teacher used questioning skilfully to explore pupils' ideas and to check their understanding of key words such as morale and empathy.
- The teaching of reading, including phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and mathematics has improved since the previous inspection and this is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Teachers are providing good opportunities for pupils to apply their reading and mathematical skills to different activities.
- Pupils are set clear individual learning targets for reading, writing and mathematics. This is helping them to make better progress because they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- The marking of pupils' work has improved. Teachers provide praise for good pieces of work and constructive comments to help pupils to the next stages of their learning. Pupils told the inspectors how teachers' marking was helping their learning.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is effective. These pupils receive clear guidance and support, which helps them to make good progress.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Records of incidents show that behaviour is typically good over time.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe at school because they are well looked after by the staff.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They are attentive and cooperative and participate with enthusiasm in the activities provided. Pupils particularly enjoy the additional activities such as sporting activities and visits. Not all pupils take enough care and pride in their presentation of work.
- Pupils are courteous and friendly, showing consideration and respect for others. They relate well to adults and to their peers. Through their studies, they show a good understanding of different cultures and faiths.
- During the inspection, pupils commemorated the people who served in the Great War. They showed a clear appreciation of the sacrifices that were made and gained a good knowledge and understanding of the conditions that soldiers had to fight in. Throughout the events, which included an assembly, lessons and a tea party at the end of the day, the pupils were reflective, responsible and very well behaved.
- Pupils respond well to additional responsibilities, such as serving on the school council, or being a school trustee or a peer mentor.
- Discussions with pupils show that they show a clear understanding of bullying and its different forms, including name-calling and cyber-bullying. Pupils report that bullying rarely happens in the school. There are clear and effective procedures for dealing with inappropriate behaviour, including bullying.
- The school works hard to promote good attendance and this is above average. Since the previous inspection, successful action has been taken to improve punctuality.

## The leadership and management **require improvement**

- Leadership and management have not yet established consistently good teaching across the school to ensure that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Partnerships and communication with parents require improvement. The school has not been effective enough in seeking parents' views, tackling their concerns and communicating the school's successes to them. As a result, a number of parents hold negative views about the school.
- The senior leadership team have a clear overview of pupils' achievement and of the quality of teaching. Despite staffing changes, there have been improvements to teaching and pupils are now making faster progress. However, the improved pupil progress has yet to have a full impact on attainment by the end of Year 6.
- Year group leaders are developing well in their role because of the training and support they have received. However, middle leaders do not all have a detailed understanding of how well pupils are achieving in English and mathematics across the whole school.
- The new senior leaders have successfully implemented an effective system for checking and tracking pupils' achievement. The system is easy to use and provides valuable information on how well different groups of pupils are achieving. The school can demonstrate clearly how well pupils are doing and identify pupils who need swift action to prevent them falling behind.
- The arrangements for the appraisal and performance management of teachers have been strengthened since the previous inspection. Targets to improve teachers' skills are well linked to the school's improvement priorities, particularly pupils' progress. Staff promotion and salary increases are correctly based on responsibilities and the progress that pupils make.
- The additional funding is properly used to provide eligible pupils with the support they need. The progress of pupils supported by the funding is improving and gaps are closing.
- There is an appropriate range of subjects and topics to promote pupils' learning. Effective action has been taken to improve pupils' learning in reading and mathematics. Leaders are working on raising pupils' achievement in writing.
- The primary sports grant is used very well to extend pupils' sporting opportunities and to develop the skills of staff in the teaching of physical education. The school provides a wide range of sports and physical activities for pupils, including athletics, basketball, cricket, cross-country running, golf, horse riding, rock climbing, and table tennis. Pupil participation in sport is high in the school.
- Pupils learn and develop in a caring and safe environment. All have equal access to the full range of learning opportunities provided. There are no signs of discrimination in the school.
- The local authority has an accurate overview of the school's performance and has provided good support to help move the school forward. A school improvement partner is in the school on a regular basis, providing challenge and support and checking the school's progress. A consultant headteacher, commissioned by the local authority is also providing valuable support.

### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have an accurate and realistic view of the school's effectiveness, particularly pupils' attainment and progress. They recognise improvements that have been made but know that attainment by the end of Year 6 is not yet high enough. Governors receive accurate and clear information about the quality of teaching. They understand requirements relating to the management of staff performance and the importance of promotion and salary increases being linked to pupils' progress. Governors ensure that additional funding is properly spent and check the impact of spending on pupils' progress. They have ensured that all safeguarding procedures meet requirements. However, they have been less effective in seeking the views of parents and responding to their concerns.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131190
<b>Local authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	441918

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	456
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lynne Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lisa Moorhouse
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	January 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 507914
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